

*At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends*  
by Dwight D. Eisenhower

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“Racing down a wooden platform one evening with some of my friends, I slipped and fell to one knee. The damage seemed slight except for ruining a brand new pair of trousers that I had bought and of which I was exceedingly proud. There was no bleeding; instead just a raw, red spot on my knee. The next morning there were no ill effects and I went to school.

On the evening of the second day, I did not feel well and I lay down on the sofa in what Mother always called the ‘front room.’ I dropped off, it seems, into delirium. My parents were alarmed and called for the doctor. There ensued a hectic time in our life, lasting for a couple of weeks. My mother was the day nurse and a friend of hers the night nurse and they stayed constantly at my bedside. The doctor came two or three times a day and only occasionally was I conscious—usually when he used his scalpel to explore the wound. On one of his visits, I heard him mention the word ‘amputation.’

At that time, my ambitions were directed toward excellence in sports, particularly baseball and football. I could not imagine an existence in which I was not playing one or both. When I heard Doctor Conklin talking about amputation, I became alarmed, and even furious.

When Ed got home, I called him and made him promise to make sure that under no circumstance would they amputate my leg. ‘I’d rather be dead than crippled, and not be able to play ball.’ The doctors—for by that time Dr. Conklin had called in a consultant from Topeka—were frustrated by my attitude. But my parents understood. While they were against such contact sports as football, they agreed to accept my decision. After drastic measure, which included the painting of a belt of carbolic acid around my body, the progress of the disease was stopped. I was ill for so long and so seriously that I remained out of school the rest of the spring and had to repeat that year.

This episode has often been told in biographies or magazine articles. One story said that my parents remained in prayer, day and night, for two weeks. This is ridiculous. My parents were devout Christians and there is no doubt that they

prayed for my recovery, but they did it in their morning and evening prayers. They did not believe in 'faith healing.'”

At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends. From amazon. 7 purchased by readersGMG may get a commission. Buy now. I make it a practice to avoid hating anyone. If someone's been guilty of despicable actions, especially toward me, I try to forget him. I used to follow a practice—somewhat contrived, I admit—to write the man's name on a piece of scrap paper, drop it into the lowest drawer of my desk, and say to myself: "That finishes the incident, and so far as I'm concerned, that fellow." In his book *At Ease: Stories I Tell My Friends*, he advises: Always try to associate yourself with and learn as much as you can from those who know more than you do, who do better than you, who see more clearly than you. Advertisement. *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* by Dwight D. Eisenhower. pp. 83. "When Earl was about three years old and I was nine or ten, he and I were playing in a workshop attached to the big barn behind our home. He crawled up on a box near a window, unnoticed by me. On the window sill was a knife which I had carefully placed out of his reach when we first arrived. I was busy playing when he, with the knife in his hand, jumped off the box. I heard a scream. Looking around, I saw that his hand had flown up to his face. The blade had punctured his eyeball. The eye was thought to be the most delicate pa